Rit: (1) Walmesley

A LETTER *written by* Mr. Henry Holden *Doctor of the faculty at* Paris, *touching the prohibition at* Rome *of* Mr. Blacklow's *Book, intituled,* Tabulæ ſuffragiales.

To the Reader,

HAving had the advantage and honour of a long acquaintance with Mr. *Blacklow*, whom I take to be one of the learnedſt men of our Nation, I received ſome ſcandal at the hearing his Book was condemned at *Rome*, in which I was the more concerned through the cenſures given thereon by ſeveral of my acquaintance, more knowing then my ſelf in ſuch matters; yet out of my love and eſteem of his perſon very unwilling to believe

there was juſt cauſe for this cenſure, I thought fit to enquire of Doctor *Holden*, from whom I received this following Anſwer; which as it hath rectified my ignorance, ſo may it perhaps doe the like of others, who as I are acquainted with Mr. *Blacklow*; and may be worth the reading of all men who care to inform themſelves of ſuch prohibitions, and actions of that nature, proceeding from the Inquiſition at *Rome*, wherefore I have cauſed it to be printed.

Sir,

I received your long Letter of the 10th. of *October* 1657. and whereas amongſt other things you ask me what do I now ſay to Mr. *Blacklow*'s doctrine ſince the Pope's laſt *Decree* againſt it? why, Sir I ſay, I am ſtill of the ſame opinion I was, ſpecified in my laſt unto

unto you of the firſt of *Aug.* And that you are miſtaken in the nature of theſe *Decrees* from *Rome*, I have ſeen the *Prohibition*, and it is of ſeveral ſmal treatiſes named in it, dated the 6. of *September* laſt, by the way of an addition to the *Index* of forbidden books. And the very laſt of thoſe flying ſheets there mentioned is the name of one of M. *Blacklow*'s works, entituled, *Tabulæ ſuffragiales.*

Now *Sir*, That you may not be too eaſily carried away with the vulgar ignorant, and take a *Prohibition* for a *condemnation* of hereſie; And a *Decree* of the *Congregation* of Cardinals and others, called, the *Inquiſition*, for a Bull of the Pope himſelf, I will tell you as a friend, and as (I ſuppoſe) not verſed in theſe buſineſſes, what underſtanding and truly Learned men do think of theſe *Prohibitions*. With this *Caveat* neverthe-

leſs, that however eaſie a thing it is to get any private man's writings put into the *Index* of forbidden books amongſt others: Yet ought not any Catholike to contemn or ſlight theſe *Decrees*, ſince they bear the name of a ſupreme Superiour. I will therefore inform you in a word what theſe *Prohibitions* are, and upon what grounds they are generally given.

Firſt, they are only acts of a particular Court or *Congregation* in *Rome*, Though put out in the Pope's name, as all other acts of the ſeveral Courts of that City uſually are. And therefore do not oblige, nor are commonly held to be of any force out of the Pope's territories; unleſſe ſome other State or Biſhop receive and publiſh them. Nor are theſe kind of *Decrees* ever admitted in *France*, but often rejected by the Parliament of this Town, the moſt famous

mous and learned Seat of Judicary in the Chriſtian world.

Secondly, we ſee theſe *Decrees* proceed from two cauſes, or rather in two caſes. Firſt, when the forbidden book contains any thing contrary to the common, though only tolerated, cuſtome of the Church; or to the ordinary practiſe and pretentions of the Court of *Rome*. 2. When ſuch books are of that nature, as that the more ignorant or weaker ſort of men; or the more irreligious and looſer liv'd, may there find, or thence eaſily gather whereat to be much ſcandalized. Which to prevent belongs to the zealous ſolicitude of a general Paſtour and common Father. Not that ſuch forbidden books do always contain ſomething contrary to our Catholike faith (which then are particularly ſpecified as ſuch, and branded with the cenſure of

hereſie) but that they are judged by the *Inquiſition* to be obnoxious and apt to beget evil conceits and opinions in the peoples fanſies; or at leaſt prejudicial to ſome greater good then their divulging could produce.

Hence we ſee many books forbidden (as in this very *Decree*) nothing relating to the revealed points of our Chriſtian belief; Yea ſome undoubtedly containing the true grounds of all Chriſtianity, as the Bible it ſelf in vulgar tongues. So that the *Inquiſition* doth principally attend in theſe *Prohibitions*, what may be the effect of ſuch books through the ignorance or malice of their readers, without examining what the particular doctrin of the book may be in it ſelf. And here I muſt confeſs, that M. *Blacklow*'s unuſual expreſſions & his exotick opinions are not fit in my judgment to be

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expos'd to the view of everyordinary man, or envious malevolent. For his doctrine, being both profound and obscure, is beyond the reach of every common reader. Who, if he chance to be proud and self-conceited (as it often happens) and have a tooth against the Author, he forgeth as many heresies in his own brain, as there be passages he understands not. Experienced and learned men know how many famous books written by the *R. R. f. f.* of the society of Jesus, of several Nations, have been forbidden in this kind. And some of our *French* Jesuits volums highly *condemned* by the *Inquisition* of heresie; others for maintaining the *Gallican* priviledges prejudicial to the Pope and Court of *Rome*'s pretentions: which notwithstanding the Authors themselves have caus'd to be reprinted

in this Town the year immediately following their *Prohibition*. And of the *Spaniſh* Jeſuits books ſome have been cleared and approved by the *Inquiſition* of *Spain*, after they had been cenſured and condemned by the *Inquiſition* of *Rome*. This I ſay not, as either diſreſpecting the *Inquiſition's Decrees*, or diſapproving theſe R. R. *f. fa.* proceedings. Who am I? that I ſhould doe either? every man defends his own right. I only aym to let you underſtand the nature of theſe *Roman Prohibitions*. And not only they, but even the Pope's own perſonal Bulls are not held to be of any obligation in *France*, until they be allow'd of by the King, verified in Parliament, received by our Biſhops, and publiſhed by our Pariſh Churches. It is true, we ſee that now and then ſome factious ſpirits make uſe of theſe *Decrees*

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of the *Inquiſition* to cry down with clamours their Adverſary's reputation amongſt the credulous vnlgar, and procure them to this effect. Which were it done out of pure zeal, though indiſcreet and without knowledge, yet were it pardonable. And therefore you muſt not always condemn ſuch as may perhaps out of an innocent reſpect to this *Prohibition*, blame Mr. *Blacklow's* doctrine.

If you come to the ſight of this *Decree*, you will clearly ſee the *Inquiſition's* intention is to take away an occaſion of ſcandal to the weak and ignorant. Thinking it better to ſuppreſſe thoſe bold and contentious, though never ſo learned, pieces, then to expoſe many thouſands of infirm and unlearned men to the danger of being diſedified.

Firſt, you will ſee forbidden the

the 18 *Provincials Letters* (whereof I doubt not but you have heard) in which there is not a word of any Doctrine propoſed by the Author himſelf, being meer citations of many licentious and ſcandalous opinions, taught and publiſhed (as he ſays) by the *R. R. f. f.* of the ſociety of Jeſus. And you may wel think, the *Inquiſition* might juſtly fear it would be a ſcandal to the Church, if believed, that ſuch a conſiderable member of it as that company is, ſhould maintain and practiſe ſuch wicked Tenets. And therefore thought fit to forbid thoſe Letters.

In the next place there is forbidden a ſlight leaf of a ſheet of paper, called, *Lettre d'un Advocat touchant la Bulle d'Alexandre 7.* Which is only concerning a political point of the *Priviledges* and *liberties* of *France*, againſt the Introdu-

troducing of the *Inquiſition* or other ſubjection into the Kingdome: Which ſeemed offenſive to the Court of *Rome*, and therefore forbidden.

In the third place there are forbidden divers ſmall ſcholaſtical Treatiſes of the famous *Monſieur Arnauld's*. Whereof one is his Epiſtle to me. In all which works his chief drift is to ſhew that his opinion, concerning *efficacious Grace*, is nothing different from the doctrine of the antient Fathers, particularly of St. *Auſtin*, and St. *Thomas* of *Aquin*. Renouncing what ever he may ſeem to affirm diſſonant from them. And ſure it would be a ſcandal to have it thought that the doctrine of thoſe Fathers, honoured and approved by the Church for ſo many hundred years together, ſhould now come to be cenſured and condemned. And therefore

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the *Inquiſition* judged it fit to ſuppreſſe thoſe treatiſes as endeavouring to prove it.

In the laſt place is thruſt into this Catalogue of theſe forbidden books, Mr. *Blacklow*'s treatiſe, called, *Tabulæ ſuffragiales*, with it's Appendix, *teſteræ Romanæ evulgatio.* Wherein the Author's principal deſign is to prove that great truth, and eſſential rule of all Chriſtianity, to wit, that our Catholike faith is to be reſolved into univerſal tradition. As alſo to demonſtrate the antient opinion of our faculty at *Paris*, That the Pope is not unerrable and infallible in his own ſingular perſon. But indeed he goes ſomewhat farther, and condemns the contrary opinion as *improbable*, *Heretical* and *Archiheretical.* And therefore you need not wonder if the *Inquiſition* have forbidden his book, without ſpecifying his doctrine,

ctrine, being ſo oppoſite to their pretentions, though the opinion it ſelf (not cenſuring the contrary) be a common Tenet of many both of our antient and modern Doctors of *Paris*.

In fine, the *Decree* forbids the keeping or reading of any of theſe or other books written in defenſe of *Janſenius*. Yea and of printing any thing (without the *inquiſition's* leave) about the matter of *Grace*. Which I underſtand not how they could ever imagine ſhould be obſerved, at leaſt beyond the limits of the Eccleſiaſtical ſtate. Can they think that all the learned Divines of *Europe*, as well Readers and Profeſſours, as others, ſhall daily ſtudy, write, diſcuſſe, and teach publickly and privately the hard and ever-diſputed Queſtions of *Grace and free will*, and none ſhall print any of that ſubject? Believe it that will,

will, I am ſure it will be otherwiſe.

There is one word, which perhaps unexperienced men may ſtumble at, And which the Adverſaries to theſe forbidden Authors will alledge in an evil ſenſe, That is, *damnat*; Which is an uſual word in the ſtyle and form of theſe *Decrees*, And here ſignifies not, nor doth the *Inquiſition* intend it ſhould, to *condemn of hereſie* the books they forbid. It were ridiculous to think it, being the greater half of theſe prohibited books (though the word *damnat* be common to them all) have nothing in them concerning any point of our Chriſtian faith; but are only matters of morality and diſcipline, and therefore it is to be taken, for to *diſallow*, diſprove, and blame.

Now *Sir*, as we abroad, verſed in the great continent, and living

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in the open profeſſion of our Catholike Religion, take no notice of theſe *Decrees*, I ſay, in relation to the approving or diſapproving of any point of our Chriſtian and Catholike faith; ſo I conceive the Catholikes of your Iſland, though now hidden and obſcured, living under the yoke of perſecution, will in time come to know more exactly the ſeveral degrees of reſpect which may be due to the *See* and *Congregations* of *Rome*. And then at leaſt, they will forbear, as we doe, to cenſure, upon ſlight grounds, any particular learned man's ſingular opinion; wherein if these lines may in the interim prevaile with you, I ſhall obtaine my deſire. Let others doe as God ſhall inſpire them; To whoſe heavenly Protection I heartily commend both them

them and you, Resting as ever,

Your most humble and truly affectionate servant,

Paris Novemb. 19. 1657.

H. HOLDEN.

FINIS.